

**PART II:**  
**APSR Report FY 2005**

**(3) Foster/Adoptive Home  
Recruitment**

**Children's Administration**  
**Department of Social and Health Services**

## **Annual Progress and Services Report FY 2005 Foster/Adoptive Home Recruitment**

### **Foster Home Recruitment**

**A contract with Families for Kids Recruitment Resources (FFK-RR)**, a division of Lutheran Community Services has been the major component of the Children's Administration's (CA) foster home recruitment system. This contract was completed on December 31, 2004.

**New contracts were awarded** for 2005-2006 as the result of a process using a Request for Proposals (RFP) for both recruitment and retention of foster homes.

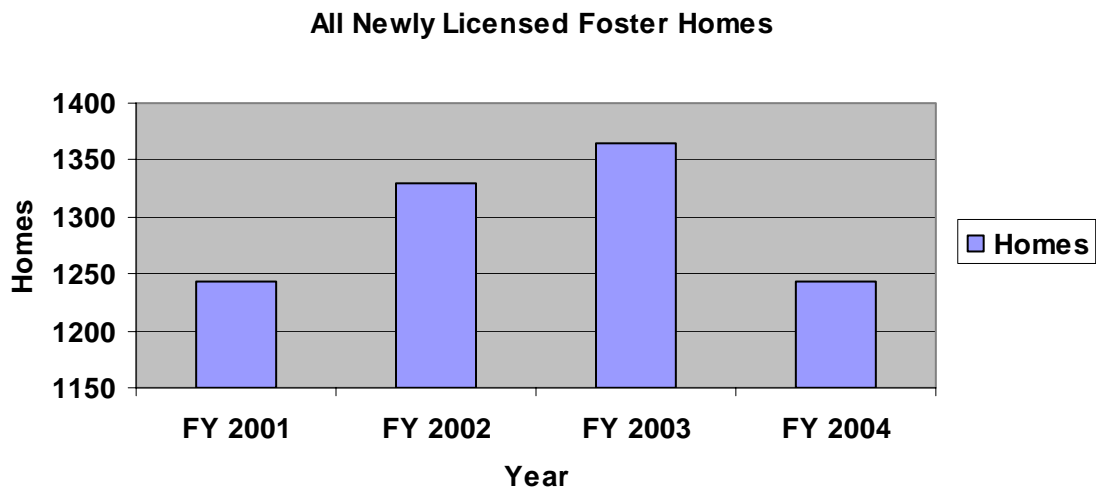
The YMCA of Greater Seattle was awarded the current contract for recruitment activities under the RFP for five of six regions. The Foster Care Resource Network (FCRN) was awarded the contact in the other region, Region V. The work of the contractors remains similar to the previous work of FFK-RR, using current or former foster parents as recruiters and paying them a monthly stipend. Foster parent recruiters work within their own geographic areas, so they can more readily identify and recruit culturally appropriate homes for the local children. One change with the new contract is the addition of performance standards contractors will be required to meet in regard to producing outcomes (i.e. foster parents ready to take placements).

The work of the YMCA and FCRN is connected to the state through six Regional Recruitment and Retention Implementation teams that grew out of the Foster Care Improvement Plan. During 2004, the work of the FCIP was merged into the state's overall child welfare reform plan, Kids Come First, Phase II. The regional teams, which include state staff, contracted providers, community partners, foster parents and other child advocates, meet regularly to work on recruitment and retention efforts.

**A renewed emphasis on community-based recruitment** was demonstrated when CA became part of the Family to Family Initiative funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. This initiative stresses family involvement in team decision-making about children (removal and placement), greater community involvement in the child welfare system, and in better collection of data and use of it to help with decision-making as well as community-based recruitment and retention of foster homes.

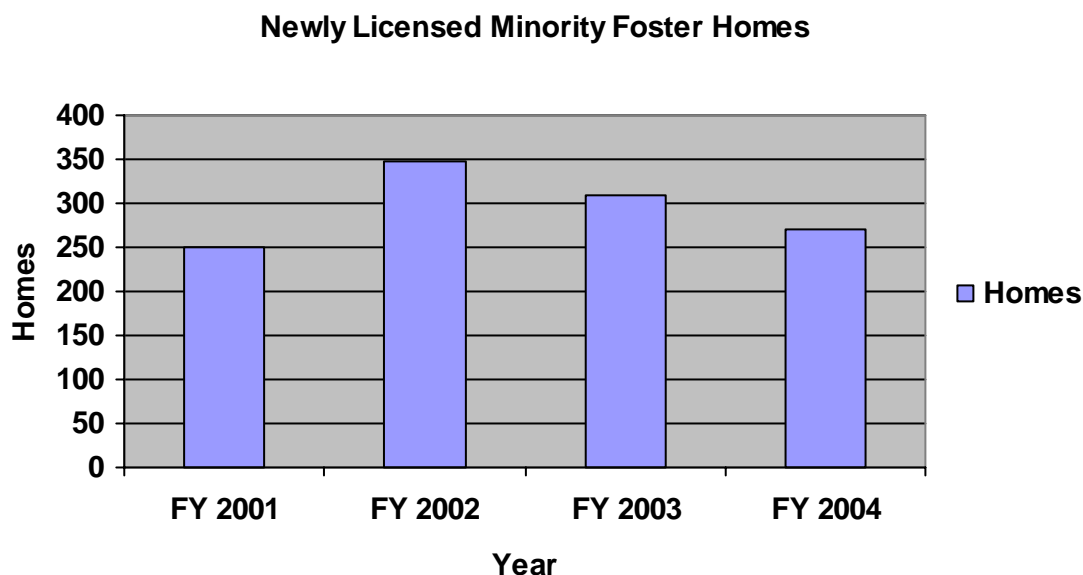
**The number of newly licensed homes** measures the success of "diligent recruitment" of foster homes. This number has remained between about 1,200-1,400 homes from 2000 to present.

The first chart reflects the numbers since FY 2001 and is the latest data available:



**Recruitment of minority homes** has been largely based on two targeted contracts: Native American homes have been recruited through contracts with Tribes and Urban Indian Organizations and a 2004 contract with FFK-RR funded via the Weidel Trust Fund. CA allocated \$75,000 from the Weidel Trust Fund, a unique fund available within CA to recruit adoptive and foster homes that reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of children in state care, to a 2004 contract with FFK-RR for eight minority recruiters. The number of newly licensed minority homes has varied significantly between years, as noted in the chart below. The number for FY 2004 is within the range of the newly licensed homes since 2000.

The chart below reflects the numbers since FY 2001 and is the latest data available:



**Many foster homes are licensed for more than one child**, so actual capacity differs from the number of licensed homes. Capacity, however, does not equate to availability. Foster parents are not required to accept the number of children for which they are licensed. They often chose to temporarily decline placements because of such issues as family medical problems or the need to “recharge” between placements. Many families never intend to accept the maximum number of children they are licensed for, but are willing to have children on a respite basis for other families. It is the gap between capacity and availability along with the need for optimum “matching” between child and foster home that drives our recruitment efforts.

While understanding that capacity does not equate to availability, another measure of our recruitment efforts is the comparison of licensed capacity by race of foster parent to number of children in care by race.

The following updated chart presents that information and reflects the latest data available:

## Children in Care by Race Compared to Foster Home Capacity: 2/05

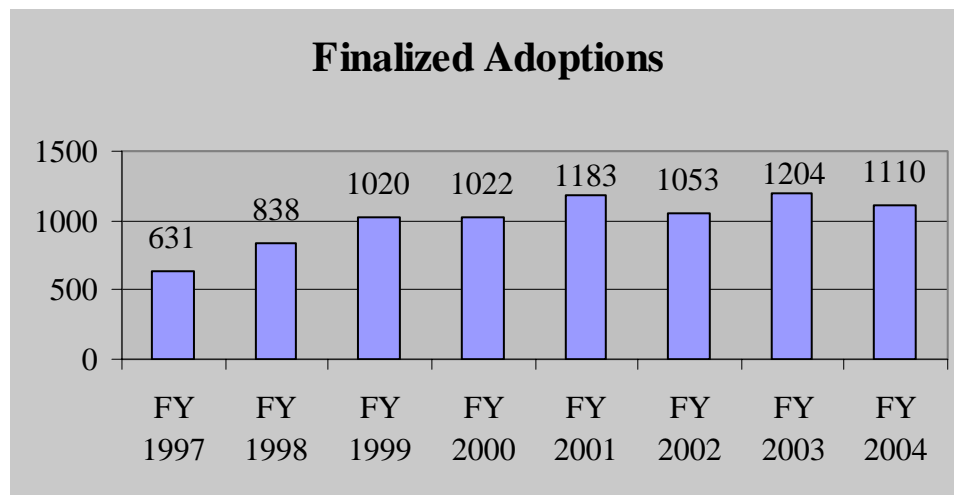
Hispanic	RACE	Data	Children	Capacity
No	African American	Number %	626 9.34%	1455 10.43%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	Number %	65 0.97%	321 2.30%
	Caucasian	Number %	3047 45.44%	10062 72.13%
	Multi	Number %	429 6.40%	32 0.23%
	Native American	Number %	682 10.17%	878 6.29%
	Other	Number %	20 0.30%	115 0.82%
	Unreported	Number %	9 0.13%	54 0.39%
Non Hispanic by Race Count			4878	12917
Percent			72.75%	92.59%
Yes	African American	Number %	33 0.49%	23 0.16%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	Number %	8 0.12%	3 0.02%
	Caucasian	Number %	471 7.02%	322 2.31%
	Multi	Number %	67 1.00%	6 0.04%
	Native American	Number %	137 2.04%	22 0.16%
	Other	Number %	263 3.92%	528 3.78%
	Unreported	Number %	9 0.13%	75 0.54%
Hispanic by Race Count			988	979
Percent			14.74%	7.02%
Unreported	African American	Number %	71 1.06%	0 0.00%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	Number %	5 0.07%	0 0.00%
	Caucasian	Number %	469 6.99%	0 0.00%
	Multi	Number %	49 0.73%	0 0.00%
	Native American	Number %	164 2.45%	0 0.00%
	Other	Number %	12 0.18%	0 0.00%
	Unreported	Number %	69 1.03%	54 0.39%
Unreported Count			839	54
Percent			12.51%	0.39%
Total Number			6705	13950
Total Percent			100.00%	100.00%

## **Adoption Recruitment and Services**

Cross-jurisdictional resources are used to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children. There are numerous activities involved in recruitment of adoptive families for waiting children. The placement of a child in a cross-jurisdictional placement many times is the most suitable placement and can avoid delays in finding a permanent placement for a child.

CA makes every effort to establish permanency for children unable to return to the care and custody of their birth parents through adoption, guardianship, long term foster care and/or relative placements. Permanency via adoption was achieved for 1,110 children in the care and custody of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) during FY 2004 as of the CAMIS data on August 2004. This is the latest data available.

Over the past eight years, the trend in finalized adoptions has continued in a growth pattern, although there are fluctuations from year to year as indicated in the chart below:



## **Adoption Recruitment Activities**

Adoptive family recruitment is a challenging and on-going effort for social workers. Finding families who can potentially "best meet each child's individual needs" requires workers to engage in several different types of recruitment activities.

- **Generalized adoption recruitment** provides information to the general public regarding the on-going need for adoptive families.
- **Targeted adoption recruitment** aims its message at a specific group or population of individuals or families who may have specific interests or abilities in caring for children who need a permanent home.
- **Child specific adoption recruitment** profiles the strengths and needs of an individual child or sibling group.

Workers who are engaged in adoption recruitment activities are encouraged to cast the broadest net possible, which in turn reaches the greatest number of individuals and families who may be interested in adoption. In order to find the most appropriate family for a child who does not have a permanent adoptive family identified, there must be a ready resource of waiting prospective adoptive families who have the potential to meet the unique special needs of each child. In an effort

to locate potential adoptive families, CA provides numerous recruitment sources to social work staff. These options include individual staff recruitment activities, attending adoption consortiums to meet with other adoption agency staff, recruitment contracts with community partners and utilization of local, regional and national adoption exchanges. In FY 2004, Washington began placing some of our waiting children on the National AdoptUSKids website ([www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org)). No data is yet available on placement numbers.

**Other activities** that focused on adoption recruitment include:

➤ **Adoption Consortiums**

Adoption Consortiums promote inter-regional linkages on behalf of children. These consortiums provide a collaborative staffing process between the department and private agencies around the state to increase awareness of children in need of adoptive families and approved adoptive families waiting for placements. The consortiums are often the first step in the recruitment process, when family members and/or the current caregiver are not a permanent resource. Consortia activities many times assist workers in making appropriate matches without the need to make a national search.

➤ **Local and National Adoption Exchanges**

The Children's Administration contracts with the Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAEE), a private agency with recruitment experience and expertise, to place children on the Washington Adoption Resource Exchange (WARE) and the NWAEE exchange. Children who are not in an identified adoptive home and have a permanent plan of adoption should be registered with the WARE that provides a photo-listing that is distributed to all Washington State private agencies and DCFS social work staff who provide adoption services for children and families. The book provides a picture and a brief description of each child and is only accessed by social workers or families that have an approved adoptive home study.

The latest data available (from FY 2004) indicate there were 175 new children registered, making a total of 421 Washington children registered with WARE. As of June 2005, there are 151 registered children still waiting for an adoptive family. For these waiting children recruitment expands to a national level after 90 days. The NWAEE website ([www.nwae.org](http://www.nwae.org)) placed 199 children on its site in FY 2004 for adoption recruitment. NWAEE staff also attends the regional consortium meetings to provide outreach to staff about recruitment options.

➤ **Purchase of Service**

- **The Purchase of Service (POS) program** provides contracts to private agencies in Washington and other states, for the recruitment and placement of children into adoptive homes and as well as the finalization of the adoption. The POS program began as a pilot project in early 1980, to help offset the cost of recruitment that private agencies provide for eligible children in need of adoptive families. One of the eligibility factors includes the length of time a child is registered with WARE before an adoptive family is identified and placement occurs. This program has grown over the years with 99 children who were placed with adoptive families as a result of the POS contract in FY 2004 (the latest data available). This is an increase of 40 children over the children placed via the POS contract in FY 2003. The POS program is able to serve a limited number of eligible children due to limited funding.
- **The Specialized Recruitment Project (SRP)** has helped to meet the goal of increasing child specific adoption recruitment. During this past year, CA continued the child specific recruitment contract with Northwest Resources/Northwest Adoption exchange (NWAEE).

The contract provides specialized recruitment for 40 special needs children each fiscal year. This project accepts children who are legally free, registered with the Washington Adoption Resources Exchange (WARE), have a permanent plan for adoption, and have located no family through other recruitment methods. The contract builds upon community partnerships with local child placing agencies to bolster recruitment efforts and commitment to permanency for the children of Washington State who are waiting for adoptive families.

During the fourth year of the contract, CA was able to add 15 additional children to the statewide contract. Children under the age of six, whose parental rights were terminated and who did not have an identified adoptive resource, were targeted for participation. CA was excited to learn that the state was not able to identify 15 children within this category who were not already placed with an adoptive family. The recruitment effort was expanded to include children up to the age of 8, and the NWAEC quickly got to work on this concentrated recruitment effort.

Since the inception of this contract in July 2001, there has been a 70% success rate in placing the enrolled children with adoptive families. Many lessons have been learned along the way including identification of additional staff training needs, the critical importance of preparing children for adoption, and making good placement decisions. CA staff participating in these recruitment efforts have become strong supporters of child-specific recruitment and call to have children placed on a waiting list for the next available slot.

#### ➤ **AdoptUSKids Campaign**

Washington State in collaboration with the Families for Kids, Northwest Adoption Exchange, and Families like Ours began participating in the AdoptUSKids campaign launched in 2004. The ad campaign is slated to run for a minimum of three years.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families has partnered with, The Adoption Exchange Association, The Collaboration to AdoptUSKids and the National Ad Council to launch a new public service advertising campaign. The campaign issues a call to action to prospective parents asking them to consider adopting a child or children from foster care. The campaign aims to significantly increase the awareness of the urgent need to provide loving, permanent homes for these children. The campaign targets prospective parents, assuring them that they don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent, and that just being there makes all the difference.

The most important characteristics for prospective parents are a belief in adoption and an ability to commit, patience and perseverance, a good sense of humor and talent for keeping life in perspective, a love of children and parenting, the ability to be flexible, tolerance and understanding for your child's conflicting feelings and your own, the strength to be consistent and set limits, a willingness to learn new parenting techniques and advocate for your children's educational and medical needs, and resourcefulness.

During FY 2005, we still cannot estimate the benefits that this ad campaign will have in Washington, but are optimistic that the benefits will be rewarding. To view the ad you can visit [www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org).

#### ➤ **Heart Gallery**

The Washington State Heart Gallery is a unique portrait exhibit of compelling photographic portraits of people of all ages who need help and encouragement for DSHS clients. Nine of the Northwest's top photographers volunteered their expertise to create stunning visual



images. The Children's Administration participated in the DSHS wide Washington Heart gallery exhibit which included a collection of 59 portraits of children, teens, adults, families and seniors supported by DSHS programs.

One of the goals of the Heart Gallery is to inspire the public to step forward as adoptive and foster families. Since its premiere on April 27, 2004 in Seattle, the Heart Gallery has expanded into other counties, including Spokane, Snohomish, Pierce and Thurston counties in 2005. Visitors have found the images to be emotional, inspiring and touching.

During FY 2005, at least **10 new families asked to become adoptive families** for children, and 8 of the 9 **children** who participated in Heart Gallery portraits (89 percent) have been adopted to date.

#### ➤ **Wednesday's Child Program**

The Wednesday's Child Program provides adoption recruitment to youth utilizing partnerships with the media. The program focuses on recruitment through the use of local television stations. This program has been in existence in Idaho and has approached Washington to participate in the program in the Spokane area.

The NWAE has facilitated this effort by providing child specific information and serving as the contact number. Due to funding shortfalls, CA was not able to provide any money for this program but sees the importance of building a media campaign in a rural community that could potentially lead to a larger community. The Wednesday's Child Program has provided some recruitment opportunities in Region 1 and Region 2 for Washington through grant funds. There have been some positive responses on the children that have participated in the program, however, CA and our private partners are not always able to meet the demands for air time. The program is currently set up to provide weekly segments on KXLY in Spokane, however, getting youth that are available, appropriate for this type of recruitment, willing to participate, and logistics are barriers to the program. It would be beneficial for Washington to begin with a less rigid schedule (for example, two times a month) to build support and provide education to staff around the state.

#### **Adoptive Home Licensing**

**The Unified Family Home Study** began in 1999 as a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) project team to develop one statewide format for completing licensing, adoptive and relative home studies. The CQI team developed standardized tools to be used in all offices. The Unified Family Home Study was implemented statewide in June 2004.

Training was provided in all six regions during the months of June and July 2004. The regions received one full day of training which included an opportunity to discuss how the plan was to be implemented in each region (implementation was determined by each region). There was one day make-up training for staff unable to attend one of the previous sessions held on October 29, 2004. A heavy component of the training included assessments, shared decision-making and "raising the bar". Training recognized that staff members are already completing good work.

Training was provided to the Tribes and Child Placing Agencies on October 22, 2004 in Spokane and two trainings were provided on October 28, 2004 in Seattle. There were a total of 88 people trained from the Tribes and CPA's. The unified home study training included a component on adoption.